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Empowering Our Ministry: Christ as Spirit-Empowered prophet

Luke 4:16-30

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Last week, I tried to demonstrate a flowchart of how God worked out the ministry Jesus, and how we humans fit into the same basic flowchart of power. Faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord brings the indwelling Holy Spirit. A second experience, normally a subsequent-to-conversion anointing or empowerment, for which we might pray, brings a deepened awareness of God's presence in our lives, brings a sweetness to the Word as we read it and let it seep into our lives, and brings a willingness to be used by God through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The anointing or empowerment tends to move us to the first work of ministry, which is prayer. Our prayer life draws us into a closer and closer relationship with the Father, something we hope might be called intimacy, and it is here, in prayer with the Father, that we begin to receive and exercise the powerful gifts of the Holy Spirit, in order to make functional and practical the body of Christ, and thereby bring glory to Jesus and show people how they might also come to Him in personal faith.

This morning I want to start an arc of messages that will bring some further cohesion to this teaching. In the Old Testament, there were three major offices which God established for the preservation of His people. The first was that of prophet, the one whose task it was to speak God's Word to the people. The second was priest, the person who served as mediator between God and the people and offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. The third office was that of king, the person to whom God entrusted the governance and protection of the community of faith.

Each of these offices was usually filled by one man, but there were cases where a person occupied two different offices. Ezekiel and Isaiah were both priests as well as prophets. The strange mythical figure of Melchizedek is, both 'king of Salem,' and 'priest of the Most High God.' But when we come to the New Covenant, we find (not surprisingly) that Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, fills each of these positions. This morning I would like to focus on His role as prophet.

The passage from Luke 4 read by our liturgist this morning shows that Jesus saw Himself as a prophet. By quoting Isaiah, Jesus took upon Himself the task of preaching which is the work of the prophet, and of course He calls Himself a prophet, when He notes that 'no prophet is acceptable in his own country.' And of course the people saw Jesus as a prophet. You might remember the story, found only in Luke, of a widow's only son being carried out in a funerary pier. The woman was weeping and Jesus, out of compaasion, commanded the young man to rise, and the "dead man sat and began to speak." And when the people saw this, they said, 'a great prophet has arisen among us.'
br> What does a prophet do? I've mentioned before that there are two general areas. One is predictive of future events, and the other is declarative, calling people back to remember what God has said, or helping people understand what God is doing. But this morning I want to put a different lens on the role of prophet. It will be the same content but put just a tad differently, and I think this will help you understand both Jesus as Spirit-empowered prophet, and the way we too can exercise the gift of prophecy.

Prophetic ministry springs from vision. So the prophet is one who, if only momentarily, is given the mind of God. The prophet is, first, an anointed one who sees something as God sees it, and second, one who speaks on behalf of God.

In Luke 7, Simon the Pharisee was sharing a meal with Jesus one day, when a prostitute burst in and knelt as His feet. Simon said, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of a woman she is.' Simon got that right. What he didn't get right was that Jesus, as a prophet, had as much prophetic insight toward Simon as toward the woman of the street. So, it turned out, Jesus had some surprising and embarrassing words for Simon.

Again, when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, he discerned that she bad had five husbands. She responded, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet' (John 4). Today we would call the kind of insight Jesus had, aboutthis woman a 'word of knowledge,' but whenever we see it in the Scriptures, it comes under the heading.of 'prophetic insight.' This is because what these related gifts are all about is seeing something as God sees-I iti and speaking on behalf of God

Jesus was the ultii-nate prophet, given (through a gift of the Holy Spirit) insight of God, toward people around Him. In John 5, Jesus says of Himself, that He can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son does. That is, by prayer Jesus got the vision of His life from. the Father, and by prayer, Jesus received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to both see the mind of God, and to: have a ministry of proclamation marked by works of power.

I want to add that it is also true that'we 'see but a poor reflection as in a mirror' because during the Church age, we 'know in part, not fully.' But the Holy Spirit can and does bring glimpses into the mind of God, which of course is the pathway into prophetic ministry.

When Joel (2:28-29) affirms that the Holy Spirit coming upon us will enable us to see as prophets saw, the manifestations of the Spirit Joel mentions - seeing visions, dreaming dreams, and prophesying - are the means by which God gives us a 'piece of His mind.'

The gift of seeing is what distinguished Elisha as a great prophet. When he was surrounded by a great army of Syria (2 Kings 6), he did not fear because he saw an angelic host protecting him, and this 'seeing' prompted Elisha to pray for his spiritually blind and terrified servant: "O Lord, I pray tliee, open his eyes that he may see." And the Scripture saysthat the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots offire round about Elisha." Cool. As a prophet, Jesus came to teach and preach God's Word. When Jesus first started preaching in Capemaum, justafter the passage read this morning, it says, "they were astonished at His teaching for His word was with authority." Jesuswas so anointed to preach that often as He preached, demons would be dislodged and forced to manifest. And of courseHis preaching was the Kingdom of God, the way back to a relationship with our Creator. Mark 1: 15: "The time isfulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." As a prophet, Jesus saw deeply into the hearts of men and women as well as into the heart of God. Of Elisha itwas said that he knew what the king of Syria said in his bedchamber. Jesus has the same gift of deep seeing, which we seein the story of the prostitute in the house of Simon the Pharisee. So this ability to 'see' deeply into the hearts of others isthe ability to be so in prayer with His Father, that Jesus sees a thing, or a person, as God sees it. It's the same gift that Godcan give to us today. Jesus is preeminently a prophet because He is anointed to see as God sees, and anointed to speak on behalf ofGod. Coming from the Father, the creator of the universe, these words were unlike those spoken

by other persons in theworld. They are words of eternal life. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. This morning I've shared with you about His role as Spirit-empowered prophet. But I've also tried to remind you of the purpose and role of prophecy in God's pian for all of us.Primarily, prophecy (whether from Jesus or from one of us) is seeing something as Godsees it, andspeaking on beha@ofGod. Prophecy comes from God, and comes to someone whom God chooses, but usually comes to someone who has beenanointed, who has been empowered, who is capable of receiving the power. Not everyone is willing to be empowered. But to those who are willing to be anointed, to be empowered, God uses divine prophecy, and asks us to pray, tospeak His prophetic vision into reality. The prophetic vision often isn't yet fully realized. God waits for us to gather withHim and cooperate with Him to create something new. Brad Long tel Is a story about China. In December, 1992, during an intensive period of intercessory prayer for thehealing of wounds left from the Tiananmen Square inassacre, the Holy Spirit gave him a glimpse of what was on God's

though Brad's heart would break for the Chinese people. He saw the faces of the young students beingobliterated by Communist tanks and guns. lie felt God's love for these youthful democracy fighters, and yearned for themto know God's peace and freedom. This burden grew into three visions. In the first, a team of people from Taiwan, Canada and the U.S. was joinedwith mainland Chinese Christians in a seminary or university setting. He saw eager faces of young students and oldpeople alike, leaming together God's ways in ministry. The focus was on leadership development so the Chinese Churchcould disciple new believers. The second vision was set in the context of a sterile government office building. Tile place was filled withgovernment and Communist Party workers asking questions excitedly about Christ. In the third vision, lie saw himselfwith a group of others in an open field with people jammed together to the horizon. It was a large-scale evangelisticmeeting where, through powerful preaching, thousands were brought to Christ. Long writes that after receiving these overwhelming visions, he felt the Holy Spirit say, Get ready; you are going.His response was, 'When, Lord? And how?' He received no answer, only an awareness that God was birthing a vision. His role, at that point in. time, was topray into reality the visions God had birthed in his heart and rhind, and be ready to obey. In 1995, three years after the visions, he went to mainland China, for an extended stay at a government-sponsored seminary, where he had been invitedto teach. God had opened the door for fulfillment of the first vision. The point is this: prophetic vision is not as much about predicting the future, as it is an invitation God extends tous to share in His creation of the future. What we need to do is seek the anointing the Holy Spirit would bring upon us, sothat we can be open to God's vision when it comes upon us. After the Benediction this morning, I'm going to invite you to come forward if you haven't yet received Christ asyour Savior and Lord. Or if you feel a need to re-commit your life to Christ. Or if you wish to receive the anointing, theempowerment, the baptism with the Holy Spirit. We would have this anointing, so that we can more readily hear whatGod may be saying to us, as He uses us to birth new visions in our church. the Holy Spirit is the Lord God Almighty. He is an eager co-participant in the building of Christ's church that iscalled CPC. Do you want to have an active relationship with Him?Then talk to Him. He's right here.

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